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## The Detective-Hero In the American Dime Novel

By J. Randolph Cox



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# The Detective-Hero In the American Dime Novel

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## NOTE

The following paper was read before the Language and Literature Group of St. Olaf College on April 25, 1980. The response to the paper by David R. Anderson was intended to stimulate discussion and it succeeded admirably. During the discussion it was Prof. Paul Kirchner who reminded the group that the hero with mysterious origins is a traditional figure in literature (think of Robin Hood, for example). Thus the dime novel detective may not be the start of a trend, but a link in a long chain of literary figures.

In the beginning was Edgar Allan Poe. It was Poe who established the basic formula of the omniscient detective who solves the most baffling mysteries through the application of reason in his three short stories, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" (1841), "The Mystery of Marie Roget" (1842), and "The Purloined Letter" (1844). Emile Gaboriau contributed the first detective novel, *L'Affaire Lerouge* (1866), Wilkie Collins wrote the first detective novel in English in *The Moonstone* (1868), and Anna Katharine Green published the first American detective novel, *The Leavenworth Case* in 1878.

In recent years, scholars have discovered some additional early works which may replace some of these foundations. Mrs. Metta Victor's novel, *The Dead Letter*, appeared in *Beadle's Monthly* in 1866 and later as one of *Beadle's Fifty Cent Popular Novels*. Since it is reported to have appeared somewhere else two years earlier, it may be the first detective novel of all. We do not have a verified earlier appearance at this time.

*The Memories of the ex-convict turned thief-taker and founder of the famed French police force the Surete*, Francois Eugene Vidocq were first published in 1828, and this semi-factual account is considered to be the source for many of the conventions of the detective story. Vidocq's method of insinuating himself into the company of the criminal through his mastery of disguise is only one of the many conventions. His exploits were familiar enough to readers of the late nineteenth century for his name to become synonymous with the word "detective." In the dime novel detective story the hero is sometimes referred to as "an American Vidocq."

The real "American Vidocq" was a man named Allan Pinkerton (1819-1884), the founder of one of the first detective agencies in the United States. During his career he foiled an early assassination plot against Abraham Lincoln and helped establish what later became the United States Secret Service, while his Pinkerton Rogues' Gallery formed the basis of the Criminal Identification Department of the F.B.I. He employed the first woman detective in the nation, Kate Warner, who may have been the model for the heroine of "Lady

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Kate, the Dashing Female Detective" (Old Sleuth Library No. 30, 1 Sep. 1886) as well as detective Ida Jones in the early Nick Carter stories. Pinkerton's name replaced that of Vidocq as a synonym for "detective" to some extent. The emblem of the company, a large, open eye with the motto "We never sleep" is popularly supposed to be part of the origin of the term "private eye." It may be true.

Besides all of this, the Pinkerton name was signed to 18 volumes of semi-fictional episodes in the history of the agency, including Allan Pinkerton's autobiography, *Thirty Years a Detective* (1884). It was this set of books which influenced the structure of the dime novel detective story at the turn of the century. *The Expressman and the Detectives* (1874), *The Mollie Maguires and the Detectives* (1877), and *Criminal Reminiscences and Detective Sketches* (1878) were the titles of some of these books written by anonymous writers based on Agency notes.

It took America's foremost humorist of the day, Mark Twain, to point up some of the discrepancies between the detective story of reason and logic (like "The Purloined Letter") and the methods used in the Allan Pinkerton books. In "Tom Sawyer, Detective," "A Double-barreled Detective Story," "The Stolen White Elephant," and the unfinished novel, "Simon Wheeler, Detective," he poked fun at the Pinkerton methods; the many disguises, the constant shadowing of suspects, and the voluminous reports filed by the agents. One favorite investigative method, gaining the confidence of a suspect in order to obtain information and perhaps a confession may have been borrowed from Vidocq.

"The Expressman and the Detective" deals with the robbery of the Adams Express Company by one of its clerks, Nathan Maroney. There is never any doubt of his guilt, but the Pinkerton Agency requires absolute proof so an agent named Roch is assigned to follow Maroney. Roch disguises himself as a German immigrant. He wears a yellow wig and a peaked leather cap, smokes a long clay pipe and carries a carpet-bag. For weeks he follows Maroney by rail and steamboat throughout the Southern United States. Sometimes he manages to get close enough to sit next to his quarry and once (thinking he might be left behind) Roch jumps onto a boat right behind the man. Eventually, the reader feels sorry for Maroney for being so hounded and harassed. On the other hand, anyone who could live for weeks next to a long-haired German immigrant in outlandish clothes without becoming suspicious deserves his fate.

If Mark Twain saw humor in these stories, other writers treated the conventions and situations with less jest and a growing interest in crime and its detection became evident in the mass-produced story papers and dime novels.

Story papers were weekly newspaper-format publications which published fiction instead of news. The format allowed the publisher to use the special postal rates granted for mailing anything that looked like a newspaper.

Dime novels were paperback books published in a numbered series priced to sell for a nickel or a dime. They were cheap to produce and cheap to buy. The real story of the growth of the detective story in the nineteenth century won't be fully appreciated until we can identify and study more of these examples.

Originally the term "dime novel" referred to a specific series of paper-covered books called *Beadle's Dime Novels* which were published between 1860 and 1874 by Irwin P. Beadle. Popularly, the term refers to any work of sensational fiction issued in paper covers in the United States between 1860 and 1915, when the pulp magazine took over the market. Irwin Beadle, his older brother, Erastus, and their partner, Robert Adams, were not the first to pub-

lish cheap paper-covered novels, but they were the first to publish them regularly and continually at a fixed price. The firm later became known as Beadle & Adams, remaining in business until 1898. Many of their titles were reprinted by other publishers after that date, a fact that accounts for the existence of so called "Beadle" editions into the 20th century.

The format varied from a 4-by-6-inch or 5-by-7-inch book of 96 to 250 pages (sometimes more) to the 8½-by-11-inch, or slightly larger, "nickel weeklies" of 32 to 64 pages. Some dime novels were illustrated throughout, but most had only a single cover illustration of an action scene designed to attract the customer. Originally published in black and white, these illustrations were being printed in color by 1897. The earliest dime novels were printed on rag-content paper, while later ones were printed on newsprint or wood pulp paper. There are instances where a publisher seems to have used a poorer grade of paper on certain publications than on others.

The early dime novels were tales of frontier life in America. Beadle's *Dime Novels* No. 1 was "Malaeska: The Indian Wife of the White Hunter," by Mrs. Ann S. Stephens, published in June 1860. As America became industrialized and the cities grew, the frontier hero was replaced by an urban hero, most often a detective. In his study of the firm of Beadle and Adams, Albert Johannsen considers this introduction of the detective story to have been a deterioration of the pure dime novel which was an Indian, western, or historical story. Indeed, the dime novel detective often retains many of the characteristics of the frontier hero: a simple, uncomplicated outlook on life and the ability to track an ant across the Gobi Desert. In keeping with the tradition which the dime novel borrowed from James Fenimore Cooper, the detective may be advanced in years and celibate, like the benevolent hunter in "The Pioneers" and "The Prairie."

Thousands of titles were published by more than a dozen firms. The stories were patriotic, promoted rugged individualism and praised moral fiber. They made up in action and melodramatic dialogue what they may have lacked in literary style. Some of the more prolific writers contributed heroes to American folklore: Edward L. Wheeler's frontier highwayman-turned-detective, Deadwood Dick; Burt L. Standish's sports hero, Frank Merriwell; as well as Horatio Alger's enterprising young men. Ned Buntline and Colonel Prentiss Ingraham made a legend out of Buffalo Bill and young Lu Senarens wrote science fiction stories about boy inventor, Frank Reade, from which even Jules Verne is said to have borrowed.

The characteristics which have been given to detective heroes since Poe have varied, but two seem almost mandatory. The detective really succeeds in solving the mystery, in putting together the pieces of the puzzle, and in restoring order to the flow of events disrupted by the crime. In addition, the detective is the only one who has this ability. He may have assistance, and he may be the head of an agency of detectives, but in the end it is his mind and his alone which is able to realize the significance of the seemingly insignificant and disparate clues.

"Who is able to read this riddle?" is the cry of the baffled. "I can do it," says the detective, "for I am Brady of the Secret Service!"

While the dime novel detective shares these characteristics, especially that of supreme self-confidence, he has some which will bear closer examination. If not peculiar to the dime novel, these characteristics are at least emphasized. Among these are the mysterious nature of his own background, the fear which he strikes in the hearts of evildoers, his reliance on disguises, and the reputation he has for being the greatest of all his profession. There is also the

uncanny method he uses to solve the mystery, a combination of hard work, common sense, extrasensory perception, and dumb luck.

A passage from the first number of the earliest dime novel publication devoted entirely to detective fiction (and therefore the first detective magazine), the *Old Cap. Collier Library* should illustrate most of these characteristics. The story is "Old Cap. Collier; or, 'Piping' the New Haven Mystery" (1883); the author is not given, but it is presumed to be W. I. James.

The authorship of a specific dime novel is often the most perplexing problem to anyone engaging in research in the field.

The detective was, in many respects, one of the most remarkable men of the present age.

To the police authorities of New York, he was known as Old Cap Collier.

He was by them, and is still, considered the most successful of detectives.

But around this remarkable man there was, even to the police authorities of New York, a veil of mystery which was simply impenetrable.

Not one of them knew what he had been before he had entered the service.

None knew whence he came, or wither he went.

His residence was a secret none could discover.

A letter sent to a certain place was sure to reach him, but he never came for it in person, neither could any one succeed in following the messenger.

His career was involved in mystery, even to those who, knowing from his works that he was the ablest of detectives, employed him to ferret out crimes which were impenetrable to other men.

Upon one fact all were agreed.

This man, who, had he been inclined to evil, and quarrelsome, would

On one occasion a bully of enormous strength, weighing two hundred and fifty pounds, attacked him in the street, without cause.

Collier took him by the collar and waistband, lifted him apparently without exertion, and flung him ten feet high into the air over a loaded truck, where he fell with a broken shoulder.

It was said that Collier did not know his own strength, which was simply prodigious.

This man, who, had he been inclined to evil, and quarrelsome, would have been a terror to all people, was one of the most peaceful men living.

His nature was kind and true, and noble.

It was only to evil doers that he was terrible.

Not even to those who employed him did he disclose the means he made use of to solve mysteries which, to others, would have been impenetrable.

To the good he was a mysterious guardian; to the evil he was mysterious and terrible.

And this was the man whom the chief of police had selected to solve the mystery of the manner in which the betrayed and murdered girl came to her death.

(Quoted in Edmund Pearson, *Dime Novels*, p. 151-43.)

The first of the dime novel detectives to appear in a series of stories also gave his name to the profession. He was "Old Sleuth," the creation of Harlan Page Halsey. The Old Sleuth stories appeared originally in the pages of the *New York Fireside Companion* in the 1870s, where one could also read a

pirated serial by Wilkie Collins as well as the romances of Emma Garrison Jones and Laura Jean Libbey. Succeeding detective stories were not only signed "by the author of 'Old Sleuth, the Detective,'" but were purported to be by "Old Sleuth" himself. Thus a deception was born in which the illusion of reality was added to the fictional series. "Old Sleuth" became something of a trademark which identified a particular kind of detective story. When Frank Tousey published "Old King Brady, the Sleuth-Hound," by a writer who signed his work "A New York Detective," George Munro, the publisher of "Old Sleuth" objected that he and he alone could use the word "sleuth" in this manner. The courts upheld his objection and from then on, any list of the titles in the **New York Detective Library** (in which the Old King Brady stories appeared) referred to that particular number by a new title, "Old King Brady, the Detective." The actual copies of that number, however, still read "Old King Brady, the Sleuth-Hound."

The tradition in the dime novel western or frontier story in which the hunter or trapper is a man of advanced age while the hero who wins the girl is another, younger man of upper class society was altered in Edward S. Ellis' "Seth Jones; or, The Captives of the Frontier." Here, the two figures were merged and the aged and eccentric hunter was revealed at the end of the novel to be in reality the gently born, Eugene Morton in disguise. A similar situation was incorporated into the first of the "Old Sleuth" novels, "Old Sleuth, the Detective; or, The Bay Ridge Mystery." The perplexing problem of the old detective who has fallen in love with the young heroine is resolved when the old man removes his disguise to reveal himself as "the strong, handsome, faithful, brave, loving Harry Loveland," who until now has served as the secondary hero.

Sleuth may have been able to conceal his real features behind false hair, but he could never disguise his emotions. When he overheard a conversation which added a surprising development to the situation "a singular gleam" came to his eye. When Minnie Lamont told him what her real name was he exhibited "considerable emotion, which he signally failed in concealing." This was after he had seen the vital clue to her own identity and that of her murdered father, "a gold-cased miniature, attached to a curiously-wrought chain," which she removed from her neck and handed to the detective.

As Sleuth took it in his hand, he gave a sudden start, and displayed a powerful emotion, seldom permitted to so strikingly evidence itself during his many wonderful surprises in the course of his exciting and perilous business. Minnie observed his unusual agitation, and immediately a pallor overspread her features, and she was seized by a sudden faintness, as she exclaimed:

"Oh! pray, sir, what startled you? Do you recognize the miniature?"

Sleuth's excitement was but momentary; whatever it was that so suddenly startled him, he had no intention of betraying his emotion; and in an instant he recovered his self-control as he answered, with an attempt to assume an air of indifference:

"No, I do not recognize the picture: I never saw it before, but a fact in connection with it occurred to my mind at that instant, and I was momentarily surprised at a certain coincidence." (OSL no. 1, p. 8)

That Sleuth was feared by those who had secrets to hide is evident in the reaction to his entrance by banker Emsley Merritt. Merritt hired the detective originally to learn who had been stealing sums of money from the offices of the bank. He then hired another man, a "villainous-looking" fellow named Halpin, to keep an eye on the young prima-donna, Minnie Lamont, who had

caught the eye of Merritt's son. Halpin's report is delivered at great length and with much detail. Miss Lamont has been seen confiding in an old gentleman whom Halpin declines to name at once. In a husky voice, the banker says:

"I'll give you a thousand dollars if you will tell me the name, without any further circumlocution, of that old man that was with Miss Lamont!"

"Done, boss, that old fellow was Sleuth, the great detective!"

"Sleuth!" fairly shouted the banker, as he spring to his feet and clutched wildly at space for a moment, and then fell back insensible upon the floor, as the door opened and Old Sleuth himself entered the office. (OSL no. 1, p. 10)

The complexity of the plot and the recurring cliff-hanger scenes in the novel indicate its origins as a story paper serial. It may have held its readers on the edge of their chairs as they read it in their parlors in 1872. Read straight through as a single work in the *Old Sleuth Library*, where it was reissued in 1885, the plot is a bit hard to swallow. Even so, it has a certain period charm.

The *Old Sleuth Library* lasted for 101 numbers between 1885 and 1905. Its pages were not entirely devoted to the adventures of that gentleman himself, although "Old Sleuth" did return in such stories as "Old Sleuth's Triumph; or, 'Piping' the Bronx Mystery," "Old Sleuth in Harness Again; or, Four Noted Detectives Unveiling a Mystery," "Old Sleuth's Luck; or, Day and Night in New York," "A Startling Narrative of Hidden Treasure," "Old Sleuth, Badger & Co." and "Old Sleuth in Philadelphia; or, 'Piping' the Schuylkill Horror. A Tale of Most Weird and Thrilling Strangeness." Some of these same stories were reprinted in a later publication, the *Old Sleuth Weekly* which the Arthur Westbrook Company of Cleveland issued between 1908 and 1912. "Old Sleuth" was the author of all the numbers in his *Library* including such titles as "The King of Detectives," "Red-Light Will," "The River Detective," "Tracked by a Ventriloquist; or, The Midnight Wail," "O'Neil McDarragh, The Irish Detective; or, The Strategy of a Brave Man," "Old Ironsides Among the Cowboys; or, The Weird Narrative of a Lost Man. An Exciting Story of Detective Adventure in the Far West," and "Lady Kate, the Dashing Female Detective."

Kate Edwards has most of the characteristics of the dime novel detective: she has no knowledge of her own parents who placed her in a charitable institution when she was quite young and from which she soon ran away. At 25, she has been a crossing-sweeper, a newspaper vendor, a telegraph operator, and a secret service officer with the New York Custom-house.

She was a smart, brave, enterprising, beautiful, virtuous young woman, born with great natural talent and wonderful energy of character.

The moment she had received an appointment as a detective she had applied herself to become fully fitted for the position, and had become, in her way, an expert.

It has been proven that women of spirit can fit themselves for almost any vocation in life, and Kate Edwards was just one of the sort named.

When it came to the matter of disguises she was a wonder, and had got the art down so fine that she could leave a company for two minutes and return and pass unrecognized. (OSL no. 30-1, p. 5)

One of the great advantages to the dime novel detective of having no family background is that it separates the detective both physically and psychologically from his cases and from the individuals whose destinies he corrects. The objectivity allows him to work unhindered while the dispassionate approach

may be the greatest key to his success. He is the only one who can read the riddle because he is never personally involved. When he allows himself to become involved with his clients he is unable to function as a detective.

Kate Edwards in becoming emotionally involved with her chief suspect, Arthur Everdell, in the Raymond murder case is hindered in her attempts to resolve the mystery. Ultimately, this dilemma results in her resignation from the case and her renunciation of her profession. Since the world of the dime novel is not a tragic one, no matter how many deaths may occur, she is eventually reconciled with the suspect, and declares her love for him. On the train to Scotland and the Everdell estate she encounters a passenger who makes a pass at her—"address(es) an insulting inquiry to her" is the phrase actually used.

There was a light in the compartment, and Kate was cool as a cucumber, as she quietly clapped a cocked revolver in the man's face and asked:

"Did you address yourself to me, sir?"

The way that rascal moosied (sic) across to another seat caused Kate to laugh outright, while to the man she said:

"You miserable villain! I'd serve you right to blow your brains out, and hand your miserable carcass over to the railroad officials at the next stopping-place."

The man made no reply, but sat cowering in his corner, until the train stopped at the next station, when, without a word, he bundled out, and Kate saw no more of him, and had the compartment to herself during the remainder of her ride.

Still in disguise, Kate meets Arthur Everdell, who naturally does not recognize her. She reveals her identity and confesses her love for Arthur, one time burglar and fugitive. She loves him for what he is, not for what he was.

"Oh, Kate!" cried Arthur, and in a wild delirium of passion he clasped the disguised beauty to his arms.

In the publications of Beadle and Adams, detective stories were somewhat late to arrive and were not numerous at first. Albert Johannsen indicates the first to have been "The Detective's Ward; or, The Fortunes of a Bowery Girl," which began as a serial in the *Saturday Journal* of June 10, 1871. It was by Albert W. Aiken, using the pseudonym, "Agile Penne." Another followed a year later and then the flood could not be stopped.

If Johannsen is correct, he must not consider Metta Victor's "The Dead Letter" to be a detective story. Indeed, the methods of Frederick Burton in that novel would seem to place him beyond the usual definition of a detective. He is able to read the character of a person from that person's handwriting, much as Sherlock Holmes identifies a man's occupation by looking at his hands. Unlike Holmes, Burton arrives at some of his results by hypnotizing his daughter, Lenore. While in a trance, Lenore is able to tell her father where to find a missing person. The experience always leaves Lenore in a state of extreme fatigue.

Since "The Dead Letter" never appeared in a numbered series priced to sell for five or ten cents, perhaps it may not be considered to be a true "dime novel."

Whether Edward L. Wheeler's Deadwood Dick really functions as a detective in his stories may be open to question. Certainly he has a mysterious background, but that is also a characteristic of the western hero who rides into a town, cleans up the corruption, and rides out again. Dick is more often in disguise than in his own person and sometimes that disguise, as in "Deadwood Dick as Detective. A Story of the Great Carbonate Region" (Half-Dime

**Library no. 109)**, is that of a detective, Phineas Porter.

In this story, the 12th in the series, he alternates between vigilante justice in his identity as the masked Deadwood Dick and legal justice as Porter in pursuit of a gang known as the Archangels who have been making the town of Rough Shod, Colorado, seem appropriately named. When he reveals his dual identity, he explains how he came by his second career.

"The detective whose name I bear recently died here in the hills, from an encounter with a grizzly. On his death-bed he bequeathed to me all his secrets, wealth, and his title, and I have been very successful in bringing several offenders to justice under his name."

But Wheeler wrote more than the Deadwood Dick stories. In "Death-Face, The Detective; or, Life and Love in New York" he depicts a character who would appear to have all the stock qualifications for detective work in the dime novel world. A death-like pallor to his face, a reticence to speak, and an expert detective, second to none on the metropolitan force, all indicate his proper role in our Pantheon of pursuers of the criminal element. Wheeler's woman detective, Denver Doll, likewise has the necessary characteristics, as may be seen in the first story he wrote about her, "Denver Doll, the Detective Queen; or, Yankee Eisler's Big Surround" (**Half-Dime Library no 277, p. 2**):

Denver Doll had arrived in camp, during Walt's absence, coming from over the river, in a boat.

To state that she was a splendid specimen of young womanhood, would be drawing it mild. Few were they who had met her who could not candidly say she was a queen among young women.

Of just a trifle above the medium height of women, and cast in nature's happiest mold, her figure in its neat fitting suit of male attire would attract admiration in any crowd, for its symmetry and grace.

Her face was fair and expressive, with a power to change from pleasantry to sternness in an instant, and though usually wearing a happy look, there lurked an expression about the brilliant black eyes, and the marble forehead, that told of some past trouble, which would not be forgotten.

Her rich brown hair fell in rippling waves half-way to her waist. A plumed slouch hat of snowy white; an elegant suit of gray, and patent leather top boots, with a diamond-studded "b'iled" shirt, collar, and a sash about her waist beneath the coat, made up her costume, and gave her an appearance at once dashing, and characteristic of the wild roving existence she led.

For she was a "character," a strange one, too. Where she belonged, no one knew, for she was here, there, and everywhere; what was her early history, no one could say, though there were some who would insinuate that it might not be pleasant for her to have her past exposed.

If these hints ever reached her ears, she never noticed them, and there were none ready to say they had ever been aware of her doing any wrong of greater enormity than popping over an occasional border ruffian, or skinning some self-supposed card-sharp at his own game.

It was no secret that she was a detective; it was no secret that she was a terror to, and hated by, the ruffian and outlaw element of the mountains and mines; it was no secret that she knew her own business, was a keen, nifty, discerning, but respectable woman of the world.

But among the many dime novel detectives there were two who stood out among all the rest and whose exploits lasted well into the 20th century. Those two were Old King Brady and Nick Carter. They illustrate a trend toward

greater realism on the one hand, almost a prediction of the hard-boiled detective story of the 1920s and 1930s, and a break with some of the dime novel traditions on the other hand.

James Brady, Old King Brady, the creation of Francis W. Doughty, was born in the pages of Frank Tousey's **New York Detective Library**. His adventures were soon being serialized in the story paper, **Boys of New York**, and with the demise of the **New York Detective Library** in 1898, were continued in the weekly issues of **Secret Service**.

By comparison with much dime novel detective fiction, Doughty's work, published under the pseudonym, "A New York Detective," was realistic and plausible. Brady was no strong man or master of disguise (though he often used a disguise). He was reasonably intelligent and had a broad understanding of crime and human nature. He even objected to being called "the famous Old King Brady." Doughty was careful to be factually accurate and his local color was always right. On the way down a New York street, Brady would pass all of the correct cross streets in the correct sequence. Occasionally the stories might include unrationalized supernatural effects, but primarily they were realistic. When it became apparent that Brady was one of the more popular series in the **New York Detective Library**, the stories were increased in frequency to appear every second week, with stories of Jesse James in between. Occasionally, the two series would be combined as Old King Brady would clash with the western outlaw. This may be the oldest example of a recurring nemesis in detective fiction, even pre-dating Professor Moriarty.

Contrast that description of Old Cap. Collier earlier with this concise description from "Old King Brady, the Sleuth-Hound.

He was of tall, commanding figure and uncertain age—fifty, perhaps, or more likely to be sixty.

His face was clean shaven and very white.

Large gray eyes, an aquiline nose, and white, perfect teeth—so rare with a man of his age—completed his facial outline, while his short gray hair and pleasant smile, as he looked upon the excited face of the boy before him, gave his countenance a fatherly appearance which won Harry's heart at once.

Add to this description a blue frock coat of a semi-military cut, which was buttoned tightly about his waist, and you have the man in full.

The dialogue in the early Brady stories is natural and not as melodramatic as that in "Old Sleuth." There is time for some character-revealing exchanges between the proprietor of Madame Voisin's bar and the old detective as the latter conducts his investigation. There is also time for a smoke or a chew of tobacco and a drink of brandy, activities in which dime novel detectives were not generally believed to engage.

In his pursuit of the murderer of Harry Kirkwood, Brady disguises himself as a woman and enlists the aid of a member of the household. His disguise is penetrated by the gang of criminals as he attempts to defend himself and his companion, Mrs. Withers.

And through the chamber door, now flung suddenly open, sprang Howland Pell, followed by two robust men.

"Attend to the detective, Seavers and Bill!" he cried. "I'll clip the wings of this squeaking jay!"

"Stand back, or I'll put a ball into you!" cried Old King Brady, throwing himself in front of his companion.

"Howland Pell, touch that woman if you dare!"

He thrust his hand into the bosom of his dress for his pistol.

Too late!

The men were upon him before he could draw the pistol out from its many folds.

Impeded as he was by his feminine attire, before he could make the slightest resistance the old detective, disarmed and caught off his guard for once, lay helpless upon the floor.

(NYDL no. 157, p. 25)

This passage is from "Old King Brady's Triumph; or, On the Scent of a Murderer."

We are never told much about Brady's origins, although there is a later story which recounts the detective's first case, when he was a mere boy of forty or so. In this way he has the same mysterious background common to all dime novel detectives, but by the way he mingles with people of all levels in the stories and by the way they speak to him, the reader has the sense that there is more to his world than just the immediate case. His methods appear to be those of observation, patience, and hard work, but he is certainly not as adept at disguise as either Kate Edwards or Old Sleuth. One trait he does possess which puts him in the same class as his colleagues and that is his reliance on opportunity and luck.

Bound and gagged after his capture, he is "as helpless in the hands of his captors as any child," (NYDL 157, p. 27) and overhears Howland Pell trying to convince Jessie Blakeman to run away with him to Brazil. When she refuses, since she knows Pell to be the murderer of Kirkwood, he forces her to drink something to calm her down.

In breathless agony the helpless detective listened to the sounds of the struggle which ensued.

That the villain was forcing some soul-destroying drug upon the unhappy girl there could be no doubt.

Presently the sounds died away, and a moment later Pell was heard to lock the door and hurry down the stairs.

Brady prays that he can be helped to save the girl. He is one of the few detectives with any sort of religious conviction. His prayer is answered, for, casting his eyes about him, he perceived what he had failed to see during any of his previous efforts to free himself from his bonds—a parlor match partly protruding from a crack in the carpetless floor.

Rolling over and over, in another instant he had seized it between his teeth, struck it upon the boards of the floor, and by bending his head forward with great difficulty, applied it, lighted, to the cords which bound his hands.

The flax ignites—blazes—burns.

Bravely the old man extends them outward to protect his clothes, regardless of the stinging pain.

It is over!

The cords have snapped.

Old King Brady, tearing the towel from his mouth and wrenching the cords from his feet, stands a free man once more.

But the locked door.

That offers no resistance.

One of those marvelous keys, taken from some hidden place in his strange dress—half male, half female—picks this lock without the slightest difficulty, as it does that of the room beyond. (NYDL no. 157, pp. 27-28)

Obviously, it wasn't the situation which was treated with realism in an

Old King Brady story, but next to most of the other writers of the day, Dougherty stands out by comparison. Most students of the genre agree that when Dougherty stopped writing the stories, the series suffered. The publisher apparently agreed and he was eventually brought back for the later numbers of *Secret Service*, a weekly which had not only Old King Brady, but Young King Brady as well. It should be noted that Young King Brady was not really related to the old man, but if one Brady was good, two ought to be even better. They may have been right for the Bradys appeared week after week until May 1925, although the stories since 1912 had been reprints of the early ones.

One year after the first Old King Brady story and one year before the first Sherlock Holmes story, Street & Smith's *New York Weekly*, a story paper, published a serial called "The Old Detective's Pupil; or, The Mysterious Crime of Madison Square." The author was John Russell Coryell. It was the first story about Nick Carter.

Nick Carter was not the first young man detective in a population of old sleuths, but there may be a significance in the very title of that first serial which signalled a break with the established tradition. Nick Carter is truly the pupil of the old detectives who came before him, for he represents a new American hero who has not appeared suddenly and mysteriously. His own father, old Sim Carter, trained him to the detective art, and when his mentor was murdered, Nick swore to avenge his death. In the course of finding a killer, Nick Carter also found a wife.

The character of Nick Carter does not remain completely consistent throughout the years when the major portion of the series appeared (1886-1927). Too many different writers with varied styles were assigned to the series for consistency, although to the casual reader these variations probably were not apparent. Even if we did not know that Coryell stopped using Nick as a central figure in his work after the third novel, a close reading of the stories of the 1880s and 1890s would indicate there were at least two writers.

Nick is consistent with other dime novel detectives in being feared by those whom he arrests for their crimes and his reputation is second to none. Someone once compared him to Sherlock Holmes, but he shrugged off the compliment by saying there was one major difference between them: Holmes is fictional. A master of disguise and possessed of a certain sense of humor (at least in the early stories) he is able to soliloquize on his probable chances for escape when cornered.

Calling on his father-in-law, a banker, while still in disguise, Nick has to identify himself. His father-in-law, used to having a detective in the family by now, remarks that he is prepared to have any man, woman, or child tell him the same story and have it be the truth. Giving the detective a family, while not unheard of in the dime novel, is certainly unique enough to be noted here. There are links between the early Nick Carter novels which are not present in later episodes or in other dime novel detective series. The first three, "The Old Detective's Pupil," "A Wall Street Haul; or, A Bold Stroke for a Fortune," and "Fighting Against Millions; or, The Detective in The Jewel Caves of Kurm," for a unit. One might be tempted to refer to them as a sort of *bildungsroman* in detective fiction as Nick takes up his father's profession, marries, fathers a child, establishes himself in his field, has a falling out with the official police, finds his son, Ralph, kidnapped, and sets off on the vengeance trail, later returning home to clear his name. We must remember, however, that Coryell once said his favorite author was Alexandre Dumas.

Coryell's successor as "the author of Nick Carter" was Frederic Merrill Van Rensselaer Dey, a former law clerk for Mayor-to-be, William J. Gaynor.

Dey wrote more Nick Carter stories than any other writer, though not the 1,000 he once claimed. He rejected much that Coryell had used and started over in 1891 with a novelette called *Nick Carter, Detective*. Over the years he added much to a growing legend: an agency of assistants, some of the weirdest recurring villains (such as Dr. Jack Quartz and the multi-faced Dazaar, who poisoned people with radium), and an element of tragedy when he had Nick's wife murdered by gangsters in 1904. In later years, newspaper reporters made much of this episode and distorted the facts out of any semblance of reality, but that need not concern us here.

What ought to concern us is trying to account for the tremendous popularity of Nick Carter. James Thurber tells the story, aprocrpyhal no doubt, of the man in Paris who was set upon by thugs and freed himself by shouting "Je suis Nick Carter!" His adventures were on every newsstand, kept in print by new editions and formats (the nickel weekly novelettes were reprinted in groups of three or four as paperback books), and translated into dozens of languages (including the Scandinavian). Old Sleuth never changed, but Nick Carter kept up with the times until the second quarter of the 20th century when readers decided they preferred Doc Savage, The Shadow, and Dashiell Hammett.

The dime novel has a place in the history of American detective fiction which is not fully appreciated. In its pages can be seen the transition from a rural to an urban society in the shift from frontier hero to the city crime fighter. It brought the detective story within the reach of the lowest income level in great quantities and demonstrated the real beginning of a mass market for fiction. It reflected a certain national spirit in showing how American characteristics such as self-reliance and common sense were all that was necessary for survival. The heroes were at ease in any setting, from the elegant mansion to the waterfront saloon. It served to keep before the public certain popular notions of how the detective operated including such fanciful and outmoded ones as the uses of disguise and that a criminal could be recognized by certain physical traits and that a detective could be overcome by a drugged cigar. (That one was still being used as late as 1949 by Raymond Chandler, of all people.) It was also a reminder that the late nineteenth century was as chaotic an era as any in our history, for the world of the dime novel detective was not an ordered world, but one filled with constant danger and violence. The mass production of the dime novel required that its conventions be those immediately acceptable by the greatest number of readers. It represented the dreams of a nation and thus has become invaluable for the social historian. For that reason alone the detectives are assured of an immortality not intended by the writers who only meant to deliver a new thrill each week to a public which welcomed it.

### **The End**

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## **THINKING ABOUT POPULAR LITERATURE: THE EXAMPLE OF THE DIME NOVEL**

**By David Anderson**

I have read widely in crime fiction, but until I sat down to prepare for this response by reading Edward L. Wheeler's "Deadwood Dick on Deck, or Calamity Jane, the Heroine of Whoop-Up" (1878); Francis W. Doughty's "The Bradys and the Girl Smuggler, or Working for the Custom House" (1900); and Frederick van Rensselaer Dey's "Scylla, the Sea Robber, or Nick Carter and the Queen of Sirens" (1905), I had never read a dime novel about crime.

My chief impression of these works was that they were awful pieces of writing. In a way, of course, I had expected that. There won't be any mute ingenious Miltons in the ranks of those who, like van Rensselaer Day, were accustomed to turning out a 30,000 word novel in three days. Putting at the back of my mind the fact that these dime novels were—as literature—horrible, I went on to Randy's scholarly and entertaining paper about them, and it was in reading his paper that I began to wonder if I had done the right thing in putting aside the question of the literary status of these works. I began to wonder, in short, how far we might legitimately go in comparing these samplings of popular culture with crime fiction considered as a serious literary genre. And this is the issue I would like to raise with you this evening: once we have conducted a scholarly inquiry into popular culture, what are we to do with the results? More specifically, how far can we go in our comparison of popular literature with serious literature? Can we even speak of them in the same way?

I like to divide the readers of crime fiction into two groups: those who read for plot and those who read for character. I fall into the latter category. The plot of a detective novel usually lives in my memory for about three hours after I've finished the book—after that, it's gone forever. I never know who the malefactor is until the detective grabs me by the ear and tells me. And even during his explanation I am always about three mental steps behind him. I am, to be blunt, a perfect Dr. Watson, always wanting to cry out, "But hold on there, Holmes, do you mean to say . . . ?" Perhaps you are saying to yourself, "Here's a English professor admitting that he cannot read properly—that can't be. It must be mock humility." If that is what you are saying to yourself, you are absolutely correct, for those of us who read for character are proud of our inability to follow the plot of a crime novel. We look down upon those readers who race through their novels to see whether they correctly guessed the identity of the murderer. In fact, with a slight curl of the lip, we call them Neanderthal readers. Our objection to them is that in their headlong rush to find out "whodunnit" they miss all that is interesting in a crime novel. Who is the detective? Why has he undertaken to be a thief-taker? Does he have a partner? What is their relationship? How do they divide their work between them? How do their mental habits and their personalities dictate their approach to crime? What social, ethical, even—dare I say it—metaphysical issues do their cases (and their solutions to those cases) raise?

If there are Neanderthal readers they have probably been created by Neanderthal books—books that are episodic, sensational, melodramatic—books, in short, that sacrifice everything to narrative. The dime novels I read are such books. Even though each of them rested on the commission of a crime or crimes, each had a villain or villains, each had a detective and his helpers, and even though each was structured around the detective's quest for the villains, I was struck by how different these novels were from serious works of crime fiction. The detectives were all impossibly adept at disguise, all were dead shots, all were physical powerhouses. All of them even came from obscure backgrounds. Yet, precisely because of their uniformity, their obviously cliched qualities, they were totally uninteresting. The criminals were equally uninteresting. There was no interaction between characters except that which had a romantic basis. There was no thematic interest, no charged language. There was only even spiced by gimmickry.

"Deadwood Dick on Deck, or Calamity Jane, the Heroine of Whoop-Up" provides a good example of what I am complaining about. The novel is not, actually, about Deadwood Dick. Nor, surprisingly, is it about Calamity Jane.

It is about Sandy, a miner in Colorado (which is located in the novel, by the way, as west of Cheyenne). One day Sandy meets a forlorn maiden out in the bush. He takes her under his protection by allowing her to live with him disguised as a male—Dusty Dick. Briefly, the plot recounts various attacks upon both Sandy and Dusty Dick (both of whom, like every one else in the novel, have secret pasts) after which they marry. Calamity Jane is a sort of guardian angel to the couple, shadowing them and their enemies and keeping watch on who is doing what to whom. Deadwood Dick, who plays a minute role in the novel, merely comes in at the end—in disguise of course—to help Calamity Jane defend Sandy and his lover Dusty Dick. The plot, then, is not in fact a crime plot at all; this is, like Dorothy Sayers' "Gaudy Night," a sentimental novel masquerading as a crime novel. All of the female characters, Dusty Dick, Calamity Jane, and the saloon hostess Madame Minnie (who is really Mad Marie, the first wife of the villain) are in love with Sandy. Each of them has come West to escape an unfortunate love affair, and each of them is in disguise. Nor is there one crime to hold the action together. There is one villain, the Honorable Cecil Grosvenor, but he is so busy hatching plots against Sandy, Dusty Dick, Deadwood Dick and Calamity Jane that we have no time to keep track of them all, much less come to some understanding of what lies at the bottom of all this evil. What holds the novel together? Incident. It leaps from one confrontation to another until finally all the good characters get together and confront Cecil Grosvenor with his crimes, after which, as in a Shakespearean comedy, Jack must have Jill all the way around.

Published as it was, at great haste and for a quick profit, the dime novel never had a chance to develop in any other direction than in the direction of narrative. I was very interested to learn that the techniques of mass marketing grew up with the dime novels. Here is how Beadle publishers marketed one of the first tremendously successful dime novels, "Seth Jones, or the Captives of the Frontier." In October of 1860 residents of the New York area found themselves being bombarded with posters, placards and handbills, all demanding, "Who is Seth Jones?" Just when the question ceased to be intriguing and began to be annoying, new posters, placards and handbills appeared all over the area. These bore the portrait of a buckskin be-clad hunter and proclaimed, "I am Seth Jones." Then the book was published. Well, this vignette characterizes perfectly, it seems to me, the style of all dime novels, whether they be detective fiction or not. The dime novel's great question is, "what will happen next?" "Who IS Seth Jones?"

Serious crime fiction, by contrast, though it too asks "whodunnit," subordinates narrative to some other end—usually either character revelation or moral commentary on the battle between good and evil or order and disorder. Such fiction has, of course, always been produced if not by major literary intelligences at least by significant ones—Conan Doyle, Wilkie Collins, Charles Dickens, Mark Twain and others. From its beginnings with Poe, serious crime fiction has developed in the direction of greater and greater literary complexity. It has produced the two main kinds of detective, the tough-guy and the ratiocinative detective; it has turned the tale of adventure into the exploration of revenge, guilt, fear, hatred; it has used the pastoral and the urban setting symbolically and thematically; it has explored the modern sense of a disordered universe and has, through the detective, proposed a model of the ordered universe. We may not be ready to rank crime fiction as a genre with the epic and with tragedy, but I do not see any reason to doubt that it has grown into a major genre.

All of this has been a very long prelude to the question I want to put be-

fore you this evening. When we study literature in popular culture do we not need to approach it differently than we approach serious literature? And does this difference of approach not restrict our attempts to compare the two forms? Thus, can we even speak of the detective dime novel? We can try to organize the field of literature in many ways. One of these is the descriptive way. We could organize crime fiction under the heading "any piece of literature which begins with the commission of a crime and ends with the exposure of the criminal with the intervening sections describing the attempt of a person or persons to bring the criminal to justice." However, if we define crime fiction as, "a piece of literature, structured around a detective's quest for a criminal, which has the purpose of using the quest to make some thematic comment about order and disorder," we have organized the field not descriptively but rather thematically. We would be trying to classify literature not according to what it is about (to describe it) but according to how it treats its subject (to analyze it). My sense is that it is impossible to speak of the dime novel in any other way than descriptively, for it is not capable of treating its subject thematically in any serious way; at the same time, it is not adequate to speak of serious literature descriptively, for merely descriptive categories are too broad to be useful.

In speaking of the place of the dime novel in American detective fiction, then, we are speaking of two different classes of things—the detective dime novel, which is merely a novel with a detective in it, and the detective novel, which is a novel that uses a crime and a detective in a specific way for a specific thematic purpose. We have, in other words, two subsets of literature which intersect in only the most perfunctory way—both contain detectives. Beyond that, they are quite different. As teachers and students of literature are we obliged to speak of popular literature either descriptively or sociologically, or can we speak of it as literature as well? If we do discuss it as literature may we treat it as we would serious literature? Do we risk dulling our critical tools when we turn our critical labels to popular literature. Does the term "detective fiction" lose its meaning for Poe, Conan Doyle, Dickens, even Agatha Christie and Rex Stout, if we also apply it to the works of Edward L. Wheeler, Francis W. Doughty and Frederick van Rensselaer Dey? These are the questions Rand's tremendously informative paper has left me with. Not knowing for sure what to do with them, I put them to you.

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## A DIME NOVEL COLLECTORS BOOK SHELF

No less than 4 important books concerning the popular literature of the 19th century were published at the close of 1980.

**HORATIO ALGER, JR.**, by Gary Scharnhorst. Twayne Publishers, Boston. Available from Gary Scharnhorst, 333 Prestonwood #702, Richardson, Texas 75081 at \$8.00. A very scholarly biography of Alger based on Alger's letters collected by Gary, giving new light on the Brewster incident. A very worthwhile book for the collector's shelf.

**HORATIO ALGER, JR. A COMPREHENSIVE BIBLIOGRAPHY**, by Bob Bennett, Flying Eagle Publishing Co., P. O. Box 111, Mt. Pleasant, Mich. 48898 \$15.00. Based on extensive new information which updates previous Alger bibliographies.

**A FANCY OF HERS and THE DISAGREEABLE WOMAN**, by Horatio Alger, Jr., with an introduction by Ralph D. Gardner. Van Nostrand Reinhold Co., New York. Book available from The Horatio Alger Society, c/o Carl T. Hartmann, 4907 Allison Drive, Lansing, Michigan 48910. Price \$12.95. An excellent introduction by the original biographer and bibliographer of Alger.

**PUBLISHERS FOR MASS ENTERTAINMENT IN NINETEENTH CENTURY AMERICA**, edited by Madeleine B. Stern. G. K. Hall & Co., Boston, Mass. Gives a thumb nail sketch of 46 publishers of popular literature including most of the dime novel publishers: Beadle, Street & Smith, George and Norman Munro, Frank Tousey, DeWitt, Dick & Fitzgerald. Also included are the early cloth bound publishers such as Burt and Hurst. Of import to ROUNDUP subscribers are the contributions by Ralph D. Gardner (Street & Smith) and Ross Craufurd (Pictorial Printing Co.). Your editor supplied many of the illustrations used in the book. A must for the dime novel collector.

**YELLOWBACK LIBRARY**, Vol. 1, No. 1. Gil O'Gara's publication covering basically the same publishing area as the Roundup. A great first issue with articles on Old King Brady, Judy Bolton and Leo Edwards. Subscription price is \$6.00 per year. I wish him great success.

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## NEW MEMBERS

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- 404 John A. Swete, 66-2 Barranca Ave., Santa Barbara, Calif. 93109
- 405 Stark Maynard, Route 2, Rice, Minn. 56367
- 406 Joseph Lewandowski, 26502 Calle San Francisco, San Juan Capistrano, Calif. 92675
- 407 Thomas Noonan, 98 Temple St., W. Boylston, Mass. 01583
- 408 Walter Rodgers, 6 Morris Tyke., Randolph, N. J. 07869
- 409 Jim Thorp, 37 Cox St., Nashua, N. H. 03060

## CHANGE OF ADDRESS

- 156 William A. Settle, Jr., 4711 S. 67th E. Ave., Tulsa, Okla. 74145
- 94 James D. Thueson, 230 S. Western Ave., St Paul, Minn 55102
- 313 David A. Moulton, 1225 Martha Custis Dr. #1111, Alexandria, Va. 22302
- 104 Thomas J. Mulcahy, 5949 Montevideo, Rd., Unit #8, Mississauga, Ont. L5N 2E5 Canada
- 258 Albert M. Stangler, 16 Country Club Dr., Apt. #12, Manchester, N. H. 03102

## LETTERS

Dear Mr. LeBlanc:

In reference to Denis Rogers' article "Disposal of a Book Collection" in the December 1980 issue of *DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP*, I think that some comments are very much in order. As a long-time director of special collections in some of the major university libraries in North America, I wish to say that some of the impressions conveyed by Mr. Rogers are not entirely accurate.

The larger libraries frequently are the locations that have both the technical expertise and the specialized interest in juvenile materials that makes them a good home for collections of this nature. There is considerable continuity of interest in those institutions that have active special collections areas.

While the University of Minnesota Library is indeed one of the most complete and active collections of juvenile literature in this country, they are by no means unusual in their choice of collecting interest. The University of South Florida, which has obtained Harry Hudson's personal collection of boys' books in series and other portions of his collections as well is, and likely will continue to be, very active in this field.

The University of Florida at Gainesville is also a collector of childrens' literature, although their collection is located in the English Department. The special collections of Arizona State University also contains a considerable amount of juvenile material, and pulps, science fiction, and juvenile periodicals have long been collected at the University of Arizona at Tucson. Yale University has given much publicity to their acquisitions in the *Dime Novel* genre in recent years. Their complete run of *Tip-Top* even made *Time Magazine*.

I am aware of many other major universities who have a continuing interest in juvenile literature. The reference to book auction records and the prices noted from that source ignores the peculiarities of the individual copy represented in that source. While provenance and some other items are noted, condition is not.

There are considerably more up-to-date sources of quotations available for most of this material. The cost of selling at auction is now considerable, both as to commissions paid and necessary transport and insurance charges. While much material of interest to individual collectors would likely not appeal to academic library collections, there is a great deal of juvenile literature today that we (academic librarians) acquire for the larger collections.

For the well-to-do collector the tax advantages of a donation of a competent collection to an institution can be financially advantageous.

Insofar as access is concerned, we welcome all users to share in the enjoyment of our collections, not only the original creator but any one who has legitimate reason to request access is welcome.

The expertise to physically maintain what is often quite fragile material, and the will to have it survive is almost invariably present in an academic special collections area. While only the very largest of public libraries, such as the Toronto Public Library, have seen fit to make an exhaustive collection of juvenile literature, you can rest assured that in academic institutions there is a present and continuing interest in this material.

Mr. Rogers' comments on problems involved in donating a collection to a local library are quite cogent. Most local libraries, serving a clientele of general readers, are interested primarily in more generally useful and "popular" materials rather than esoteric research collections. There are, however, a goodly number of larger libraries that have both the technical expertise and the interest in juvenile materials to make them good homes for collections of

this nature. There is, in spite of changes in librarian interest, a great deal of continuity of interest in such libraries. Once a major area of collecting has been actively pursued, the magnitude of the effort already expended and the growing scholarly value of the collection make it unlikely that the collection will be liquidated or ignored. There is a certain inertia once a sizeable collection has been obtained that tends to keep it growing.

Sincerely yours, J. B. Dobkin

Special Collections Librarian, University of South Florida

Dear Ed,

Thanks for reminding me that my subscription is up on "Dime Novel Round Up." Enclosed is \$5.00 for another year.

I would like to mention that I really enjoyed Robert Sampson's series of fine articles on the pulps. My only complaint is that the series was not long enough and did not go into detail enough. Perhaps you could have Sampson expand his articles and publish it as a book.

Though I realize you must concentrate on Dime Novels, I'd like to see you print more material on the pulps also.

Sincerely, Walker Martin

Dear Eddie:

Thanks much for the subscription. So far everything is going well and on schedule for publication of Yellowback Library. The first issue should be mailed Jan. 15th.

In the course of my research I have discovered a couple errors in the checklist of published books which I included at the end of my article on J. T. Trowbridge. The book, "Three Boys on an Electric Boat" was not written by John Townsend Trowbridge. It was, however, written by a man named John Trowbridge, a science professor and author (Aug. 5, 1843-Feb. 18, 1923). The correct title of the book is "Three Boys on an Electrical Boat"; it was published in 1894. This Trowbridge wrote books which combined fiction with science, such as the above mentioned title and "The Electrical Boy" (1891).

Bob Chenu also pointed out to be the omission of the book, "The Man Who Stole A Meeting House." There also may be a few collections of his poems or stories issued or re-issued under title that I am unaware of.

Gil O'Gara

Dear Mr. LeBlanc,

There is a new paperback series out from Bantam Books that might be of interest to DNR readers. Called The Derby Man series and is by Gary McCarthy. It's set in the west of the late 1850's and the hero is a dime novel author who has decided to visit the west that he has been writing about and see what it was actually like. So far four volumes have appeared, two of which are reprints of original Doubleday editions and two are original publications from Bantam. From internal evidence I suspect that there is a third Doubleday volume which has not yet been reprinted. Or if it was, I missed it.

Reading Robert Sampson's A TIME OF LIVELY FICTION reminded me that I am interested in romance magazines. Have you managed to acquire any pulp or slick romance magazines published before 1942 since the last time I bought some from you?

Yours, Andrew Zerbe

Dear Mr. LeBlanc

Just received the October issue and enjoyed it very much. The article on juvenile aviation fiction hit my collecting interest (one of them) right on the

head. I very much approve your inclusion of "Boys Books" articles and early pulp magazines. Thanks for an interesting publication.

Yours truly, Lyle J. Buchwitz

Dear Eddie:

:

I recently picked up a book by Frank Little Pollock entitled **NORTHERN DIAMONDS**. A note in the front by Pollock states: "This book appeared in the **YOUTH'S COMPANION** in the form of a serial and a sequel, and my thanks are due to the proprietors of that periodical for permission to reprint."

I recall reading the story in **THE YOUTH'S COMPANION** about 1915, but it had a different title as I recall. I do not remember the magazine title. Perhaps some DNRU reader can supply the answer. Apparently the sequel carried a different title than the first story, and I have a vague remembrance of something such as **BLACK GOLD**.

Any help will be appreciated.

Very truly yours, Bob Walters

Eddie:

Received your letter about the **Golden Days**. Found the information very interesting.

Dealers advertising in the **Antique Trader** often seem to regard anything more than 20 years old an object of great value, although I have had pretty good luck buying nickel weeklies at reasonable prices—usually about \$1.25-\$1.50 a piece, if I bought them in quantity. Have added many nice, clean copies to my collection this way.

A few dealers have been advertising **Tip Tops** and **Buffalo Bills** lately at five bucks each; I have made counter offers of lower prices but never received a reply. Either someone is buying them at those prices or they decided no sale was better than selling below what they wanted for them.

Came across a "price guide" to collectibles the other day. According to it, common **Liberty Boys** are worth \$15! The source of this information was not given, however.

So much for now — Take care. Gil O'Gara

Dear Ed:

Just a small note to inquire if you could help me with a price quote on **Horatio Alger Jr.** paperbacks? These are prints by **Superior** and **Street and Smith**. I have a **H. H. B.** member prospect who is interested in purchasing some I wish to sell. He suggested you might be able to give me an appraisal.

Some years ago an article appeared in the **D. N. R.** by a well known author of pulp mag. stories. A **H. H. B.** member he was a collector of **Alger** hard-bounds. He stated he was switching to paperbacks. His reasons must have been good for I also did. Colored covers, pictured. Notice the demand for dust jackets.

Ed, what do you think of this idea for the preservation in future of much of our hobby? Appoint a Board of trustees in your area to dispose of a deceased member's collection at the request of his nearest of kin, or executor or executrix? Idea met with favorable comment from members I have broached the suggestion to. Suggested compensation to the members of the board were from ten to twenty-five percent of gross sales.

Dimenovelty yours, Ed. McNabb

## RECENTLY PUBLISHED ARTICLES—DIME NOVELS, BOYS BOOKS

ARE WE WHAT WE READ? Expert Says Literary Diet a Factor in

Kids' Development, by Audrey Lewis. Utica Observe-Dispatch, November 2, 1980. A well written article on Jack Dizer's collection and his views on children's reading habits. (Sent in by Peter C. Walther)

NANCY DREW, AT 50, IS STILL THE TOP BUBBLE GUMSHOE, by Brie Quinby. Family Weekly, August 3, 1980. (The Family Weekly is a weekly newspaper supplement distributed with many newspapers from coast to coast). A review of the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew stories and a short biographical sketch of Mrs. Harriet Adams. (Sent in by Gil O'Gara)

WOMEN IN THE FRONTIER DIME NOVEL, by Nancy L. Chu. Books at Iowa, No. 33, November 1980. An excellent in-depth article on the role of women in the early dime novels, 1860's and 70's. Unlike many articles of this nature, Miss Chu did her homework and reviewed a goodly number of representative dime novels before attacking her subject. It would be interesting to note the difference in women's roles in later dime novels, especially those of the early 1900's. (Note: BOOKS AT IOWA is published twice a year for the members of the "Friends of the University of Iowa Libraries Organization. Regular membership is \$10 per year.)

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American Book Collector, Vol. IX, No. 9, May 1959

American-Scandinavian Review, Vol. 47, No. 4, Winter 1959

Jack London Newsletter, Vol. 4, No. 3 (1971); Vol. 6, No. 1 (1973); Vol. 10, No. 3 1977).

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